

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8500
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 11764

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR SECTION INFO.
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS--AN ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY. RECENT SPECULATION SUGGESTS EGYPTIAN-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT MIGHT BE IN OFFING, BUT OUR ASSESSMENT IS RELATIONS REMAIN BADLY STRAINED AND NOT LIKELY TO IMPROVE IN NEAR FUTURE. ANIMOSITY BETWEEN SADAT AND EGYPT'S FORMER PATRONS HAS GONE TOO FAR FOR MEANINGFUL RAPPROCHEMENT, AT LEAST UNDER SADAT'S LEADERSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, MANY OF SADAT'S CLOSEST ADVISERS CONTINUE TO URGE MORE BALANCED POLICY TOWARDS SOVIETS. SUCH VIEWS INVARIABLY PUT FORWARD MORE FORCEFULLY WHEN ME PEACE PROCESS APPEARS STALLED. RECENT SADAT GESTURES, SUCH AS PRAISE FOR BREZHNEV, AND UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF HIGH-LEVEL ENVOY TO MOSCOW AND POSSIBLE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS IN NEW YORK, HAVE INCREASED SPECULATION. SADAT MAY, HOWEVER, JUST BE ALLOWING SOME OF HIS SUBORDINATES TO TEST THE WATER TO PROVE VALIDITY OF HIS OWN JUDGMENT OF SOVIET HOSTILE INTENTIONS TOWARD EGYPT. ON SOVIET SIDE, COMMUNIST AMBASSADORS HERE SEEM TO BE BIDDING THEIR TIME IN BELIEF THAT, THROUGH COMBINATION OF UNSUCCESSFUL PEACE INITIATIVE AND WORSENING ECONOMY, SADAT WILL EVENTUALLY
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HAVE TO CAPITULATE AND/OR LEAVE OFFICE. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY MOSCOW COMMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS REMAIN BADLY STRAINED. SADAT'S ANTI-SOVIET PHOBIA IS UNDIMINISHED. HE PERCEIVES SOVIETS AS A REAL THREAT TO HIS PERSON AND TO EGYPT, BOTH EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY. SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA THROUGH WHAT SADAT REGARDS AS SOVIET SURROGATES, ETHIOPIA AND LIBYA, ARE VIEWED AS DIRECTED IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AT TOPPLING MODERATE GOVERNMENTS,

SUCH AS NUMAYRI'S IN SUDAN AND MALLOUM'S IN CHAD. THE ULTIMATE SOVIET OBJECTIVE, SADAT IS CONVINCED, IS TO OBTAIN A STRANGLEHOLD ON EGYPT BY CONTROLLING SOURCES OF NILE. AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF SOVIET PERFDY, SADAT POINTS TO A LONG LIST OF GRIEVANCES: MOSCOW'S CONTINUED CRITICISM OF HIS PEACE INITIATIVES; SUPPORT FOR "REJECTIONIST FRONT"; CONTINUED SOVIET MILITARY AID TO QADHAFI, AND CONTINUED REFUSAL PROVIDE SPARE PARTS OR RENEGOTI-IE EGYPTIAN DEBT ON MORE FAVORABLE TERMS. SADAT PROFESSES BELIEVE USSR HAS AMBITIONS TO BECOME DOMINANT POWER IN AFRICA AND MAY BECOME SO BECAUSE OF USG DEFAULT. IN MIDDLE EAST, SADAT DOES NOT BELIEVE SOVIETS REALLY WANT PEACE, BUT ARE PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN REGAINING INFLUENCE THEY LOST OVER PAST FEW YEARS LARGELY DUE, AS HE SEES IT, TO HIS ACTIONS. THIS SOVIET OBJECTIVE, IN HIS VIEW, THEY CAN BEST ACHIEVE THROUGH MAINTAINING "NO WAR-NO PEACE" SITUATION AND RETURNING TO GENEVA CONFERENCE SCENAIO. INTERNALLY, SADAT VIEWS DOMESTIC COMMUNISTS AS AGENTS OF MOSCOW. HE IS CONVINCED SOVIETS ARE IMPACABLY HOSTILE TO HIM AND ANXIOUS TO TOPPLE HIM BY ANY FEASIILE MEANS.

2. SADAT SEES HIS ACTIONS AGAINST SOVIETS, I.E. CLOSURE
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OF CONSULATES AND CULTURAL CENTERS, TERMINATION OF 1971 FRIENDSHIP TREATY, EVICTION FROM ALEXANDRIA NAVAL FACILITIES, ETC., AS RETALIATORY RATHER THAN CAUSATIVE FACTORS IN DETERIORATED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS.

3. AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR SOME TIME, MANY OF SADAT'S CLOSEST ADVISERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S TOTALLY NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE SOVIETS. SOME HAVE LEFTIST INTELLECTUAL LEANINGS, BUT THIS IS LESS A DETERMINING FACTOR THAN IS THEIR STRONG ADVOCACY OF NON-ALIGNMENT DOCTRINES. THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT SADAT HAS ALIGNED EGYPT TOO CLOSELY WITH USG AND THAT THIS RUNS CONTRARY TO EGYPT'S LONG-RANGE INTERESTS. FORMER FONMIN FAHMY, THOUGH ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF GOE'S PRO-AMERICAN POLICY, HAD COME TO THAT CONCLUSION IN HIS LAST YEAR IN OFFICE. FONMIN KAMEL'S ATTITUDE IS SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT. HE TOO IS AN ADVOCATE OF NON-ALIGNMENT, AND RECENTLY TOLD SOVIET AMBASSADOR THAT MOSCOW'S CONTINUING PROPAGANDA ATTACKS AGAINST SADAT'S INITIATIVE ARE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO BETTER RELATIONS. MINSTATE BOUTROS GHALI, WHO HAS LONG-STANDING PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH LEADING LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS, IS KNOWN TO BELIEVE THAT EGYPT MUST IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS. HE HAS MADE THIS POINT TO GAMASY AND HAS APPARENTLY WRITTEN SEVERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THAT EFFECT, BUT IS DISAPPOINTED THAT SADAT HAS NOT REPLIED TO ANY OF THESE. THERE ARE ALSO RECURRING REPORTS THAT OTHER PROMINENT

LEADERSHIP FIGURES, SUCH AS PRIMIN SALEM, DEPUTY PRIMIN
HAFEZ GHANEM AND EVEN MRS. SADAT, BELIEVE AN EFFORT OUGHT-
TO BE MADE TO EASE EGYPTIAN/SOVIET TENSIONS. THEIR
ARGUMENT, IT SHOULD BE STRESSED, IS NOT A TOTAL SHIFT BUT-"
BETTER BALANCE IN RELATIONS WITH THE TWO SUPERPOWERS.
SUCH VIEWS ARE INVARIABLY PUT FORWARD MORE FORCEFULLY
WHEN ME PEACE PROCESS APPEARS TO BE STALLED. SOME
ECONOMIC MINISTERS, NOTABLY MINTRADE ZAKARIA TAWFIQ,
WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS.

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TAWFIQ, FOR EXAMPLE, IS WORRIED ABOUT EFFECT OF A

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8501

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SECTIONAL INFO - SECT 2 OF 2 VICE
2 OF 3)

POSSIBLE SOVIET TRADE EMBARGO ON EGYPTIAN MANUFACTURE
OF LOW QUALITY SHOES, FURNITURE, SPIRITS, ETC. WHICH
HAVE TRADITIONALLY GONE TO SOVIET MARKET AND WHICH ARE
UNSALEABLE ELSEWHERE.

5. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF PERSISTENT URGINGS OR PERHAPS
BECAUSE OF THE STALLED ME PEACE PROCESS, SADAT HAS OF
LATE TAKEN A FEW HESITANT STEPS THAT SEEM TO SIGNAL A
WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.
THUS, SADAT, IN RECENT OCTOBER MAGAZINE INTERVIEW,
PUBLICLY PRAISED BREZHNEV AND SEEMED TO LEAVE DOOR OPEN
TO GENEVA CONFERENCE. THIS WAS IN CONTRAST TO HIS USUAL
PUBLIC ATTACKS ON SOVIETS. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD GOE HAS
AUTHORIZED PERMREP ABDEL MEGUID TO PROBE SOVIETS IN
NEW YORK ON PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH
THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT MUCH HAS COME FROM THESE
EXPLORATORY EXCHANGES. THERE WERE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS
IN MID-MARCH THAT SADAT HAD SENT FORMER EGYPTIAN AMBAS-
SADOR TO USSR, HAFEZ ISMAIL, A CRITIC OF SADAT'S PRO-USG
TILT, TO MOSCOW TO EXPLORE PROSPECTS OF IMPROVED RELA-

TIONS. THE STORY MAY NOT BE CORRECT, BUT THE FACT THAT
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IT IS BEING BANDIED ABOUT SUGGESTS IT WAS AT LEAST
CONSIDERED IN SENIOR EGYPTIAN CIRCLES. (ISMAIL IS BACK
AT HIS PARIS EMBASSY POSITION.) WE HAVE ALSO HAD RE-
CENT INDICATIONS THAT GAMASY HAS ORDERED A HALT TO
PLANNED CLOSURE OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE OFFICES IN
MOSCOW AND IN PRAGUE. WE SUSPECT LATTER MAY HAVE SOME-
THING TO DO WITH SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE IN CZECH DELIVERY
OF TANKS THAT HAD BEEN ORDERED OVER A YEAR AGO AND PAID
FOR, BUT DELIVERY OF MOST OF WHICH WERE STOPPED,
OSTENSIBLY ON SOVIET INSISTENCE. CZECH AMBASSADOR
RECENTLY TOLD US THAT HE FORESAW SOME IMPROVEMENT IN
STRAINED EGYPTIAN/CZECH RELATIONS AND THAT HE THOUGHT
THE "MISUNDERSTANDING" OVER TANK DELIVERIES WAS BEING
WORKED OUT. HERE IN CAIRO KAMEL, AND ESPECIALLY BOUTROS
GHALI, SEEM TO MAKE A SPECIAL POINT OF BEING CORRECT AND D
EVEN CORDIAL TO SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND HIS STAFF.

6. THESE ARE STRAWS IN THE WIND THAT SHOULD BE NOTED BUT
NOT GIVEN EXCESS WEIGHT AT THIS TIME. BOTH KAMEL AND
GHALI HAVE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT AT WHAT THEY CON-
SIDER SOVIET UNRESPONSIVENESS TO THEIR DISCREET OVER-
TURES. GIVEN SADAT'S OUTLOOK AND HIS PERSONAL ANIMOSITY
TOWARD USSR, IT IS DIFSUGTWT TO BELIEPFCLDQHERE
COULD BE ONE UNDER SADAT'S LEADERSHIP. AS YET NO ANNUAL
TRADE BILATERAL HAS BEEN CONCLUDED, THOUGH THERE IS
EVIDENCE SOME EGYPTIAN/SOVIET TRADE IS TAKING PLACE.
THERE ARE THOSE WHO SUGGEST SADAT IG ALLOWING SOME OF
HIS SUBORDINATES TO TEST THE WATERS SOLELY TO PROVE TO
THEM THE VALIDITY OF HIS JUDGMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS.
THE PRICE OF A GENUINE RAPPROCHEMENT WOULD FOR SADAT BE
UNACCEPTABLY HIGH. IT WOULD MEAN JETTISONING HIS PEACE
INITIATIVE AND ACCEPTING SOVIET INSISTENCE THAT PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS BE CONFINED TO GENEVA FORUM. SADAT HAS
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CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL AGILITY AND CONCEIVABLY COULD DO
THIS, AS HE DID IN DUMPING MOSCOW EARLIER, BUT HIS IN-
GRAINED CONVICTION THAT SOVIETS ARE OUT TO GET HIM IS
LIKELY TO BE INHIBITING FACTOR AS LONG AS USG REMAINS
IMPARTIALLY ACTIVE IN ARAB/ISRAELI PEACE EQUATION. FROM
ALL INDICATIONS WE HAVE SEEN, RAPPROCHEMENT FROM SOVIET
SIDE ALSO SEEMS DOUBTFUL GIVEN THEIR DEEP DISTRUST OF
SADAT. SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS MAKE NO
BONES THAT THEY ARE BIDDING THEIR TIME UNTIL SADAT FALLS
THROUGH COMBINATION OF UNSUCCESSFUL ME PEACE INITIATIVE
AND A WORSENING ECONOMY. THEY, AND THEIR LEFTIST
EGYPTIAN CONFRERES, SEEM CONVINCED THAT SADAT IS ON THE

ROPES AND WILL BEFORE LONG HAVE TO CAPITULATE AND/OR
LEAVE OFFICE.

7. APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS EMBASSY MOSCOW MAY HAVE
ON ABOVE VIEW FROM CAIRO VANTAGE POINT.
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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8502
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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HIS SUBORDINATES TO TEST THE WATERS SOLELY TO PROVE TO
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7. APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS EMBASSY MOSCOW MAY HAVE
ON ABOVE VIEW FROM CAIRO VANTAGE POINT. EILTS

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